

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting

Minutes

January 27, 2014 -- 6:30 p.m.

City of New Castle's Town Hall

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
David Baldini
Daniel Bungy
Joe DiAngelo
Jonathan Justice
Josephine Moore
Michael Quaranta
Florence Smith

Member Absent: Vera Worthy

Also Present: Debbie Pfeil, Senior Planner, URS
Linda Ratchford, City Council President

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. Messrs. Bungy and Quaranta were welcomed to the Planning Commission.

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 12/16/13 minutes. Motion approved.

Update on New Castle Way Finding Study –Gail Seitz presented. (*Handouts were distributed.*) The group is preparing to go into production of the signs and they may be able to produce more signs than previously reported. Mitchell Associates has done the signage design and Hooty Do Signs was chosen as the production company to produce the signs. In addition to the funds received from the New Castle County grant, the Trustees of the New Castle Common (Battery Park Committee) has approved some funding. Six maps will be erected in the City (corner of Sheriff's House and court house; in front of City offices; library; wharf entrance to Battery Park; two in parking areas). One vehicular direction sign will be installed at Delaware and Fifth Streets heading into the historic district. Five existing parking areas will be identified with signage (Battery Park, Third Street, wharf area, Fort Casimir) and 'bus parking' at lot where recycle bins used to be located. Multiple parking directional signs are planned. The Battery Park Committee will pay for six "Battery Park Rules" signs, install those signs and maps and parking signs that are in the park. The City will install wood posts located on City property outside Battery Park. Municipal Services Commission will install any brackets for signs going on lamp posts. Hooty Do Signs will erect the signs.

Mr. Bungy inquired whether the signs would be reflective. Ms. Seitz will check and follow up.

Update on Comprehensive Plan

Herb Inden, State of Delaware, Office of State Planning, updated commissioners on the Comprehensive Plan process. Plans are now required every ten (10) years and every five (5) years municipalities are asked to review plans and inform of any updates. The ten-year timeframe does not reset unless there is a major change (i.e., annexation,

mandates). Ms. Pfeil reminded that the State Planning Office requires an annual report from municipalities covering what is working in the City's Comprehensive Plan, what the City wants as future goals, and how the City would need assistance from the State. The last Comprehensive Plan update was prepared in 2008/2009. Mr. Inden said if the City's five-year update is large it would likely go through the State's pre-PLUS process for comments.

Mr. Inden described the PLUS process for commercial and residential projects and State spending strategies, which is the State's Comprehensive Plan. It is based on a compilation of all municipalities' Comprehensive Plans. There are three levels of expenditures for growth. The City of New Castle is in Levels I and II, urban-type investments.

Report on Parking Study – Dr. Joanne Viola provided an update on two recommendations the Parking Sub-committee is requesting be considered by the Planning Commission. The first recommendation addresses parking at Ferry Cut-Off (Chestnut and Fourth Streets): the creation of an area for bus parking, naming the area, appropriate signage, space for electric car charger installation and bicycle parking, and lighting and street scape landscaping. The second recommendation addresses school bus parking and drop off, which is a safety issues. The committee is asking the City to include schools in the gathering permit process. Any permit fees would be waived. At present they are not required to get a permit. She detailed the route for school buses to enter the City, drop-off location, and pick up routes. New Castle City Police have been asked to provide safety assistance depending on volume. Dr. Viola reported that Councilman Vannucci has spoken with the Board of Directors of Good Will Fire Co. and confirmed there will be no interference with emergency vehicles. Other topics of discussion included restroom facilities for bus drivers and sizes of tour buses on City streets. The committee is trying to avoid buses coming to the wharf area during lunch. DelDOT has informed there is not enough rider volume to support a park and ride.

Ms. Moore made a motion to forward the study done by the Parking Sub-committee to City Council for review and possible implementation. Mr. Justice seconded. Motion approved.

Dr. Viola reported that yellow line curbing and handicap parking has been submitted to the City and is under review. This signage is not covered under Way Finding but corrections are needed.

The committee is working on exploring a resident parking plan and issues in the historic area for permits and designated resident parking spaces, and mixed use potential.

Update on Waterfront Study – Ms. Pfeil reported on a recent site visit with City Administrator Bill Barthel, City Council President Linda Ratchford, Building Inspector Jeff Bergstrom and Duffield Associates. The presentation provided to City Council will be given to commissioners. Copies of the monthly update (project designs, costs, etc.)

were distributed and reviewed by Ms. Pfeil. Mr. Quaranta asked for a checklist of the scope of work. Funding for the study includes permitting. Mr. DiAngelo inquired about total cost for construction. Ms. Pfeil said cost estimates were to be submitted to the City and should be available for the next Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Bird added the City is interested in finding funding for construction. FEMA funding for the project was discussed.

Update on Comprehensive Plan – Ms. Pfeil followed up on the Neighborhood Study. The map was updated to reflect the name change of the small, unidentified area in Washington Park to Washington Square. No boundary lines were changed. She will redistribute the Neighborhood Issue Summary (7/17/13) to all commissioners for review and comment. The Neighborhood Study will be implemented in the Comprehensive Plan. Going forward she would like to introduce traffic improvement districts (TID) (pre-planning for traffic) for discussion in a workshop with the Planning Commission and City Council. DelDOT does traffic impact studies on State-maintained roads that developer's pay into as they join. Ms. Pfeil suggested this process being included in the Comprehensive Plan Update. The City of New Castle, by law, must have a transportation component in its plan, but can overlay with the State's TID.

Discussion of Safety Issues Concerning Dalby Alley – Dave Atherton explained the safety issues (pedestrian and vehicular) involving a fallen mirror put up by residents to help with egress from the alley. City Administrator Barthel was contacted and has spoken with DelDOT. DelDOT is not in favor of such mirrors; they are not a true traffic mechanism. The size of trucks in the downtown area is another problem on the alley. There are no size restrictions on the alley and one house has been struck several times. Residents are seeking mirrors, a lower speed limit from the current 25 m.p.h. and size restriction of trucks accessing the alley. At City Administrator Barthel's request, Ms. Pfeil has walked and driven the site and contacted DelDOT. DelDOT says the mirrors are a liability with who puts them up and uses them. She is working with the City Solicitor and looking at safety and liability recommendations. Liability is a major issue if the City installs, endorses or funds them. Solutions are limited due to the closeness of the buildings to the street and the alley is one lane. The pole the mirror was attached to is in the City's right of way and belongs to the utility company and permission would be needed to reattach the mirror. Ms. Pfeil suggested outreach with neighbors before recommendations are presented to City Council. She recommends this issue remain on the Planning Commission agenda for an action recommendation. *(Lengthy discussion followed.)*

Budget Status – Report will be provided for the February meeting.

Commissioner's Comments

Mr. DiAngelo – Welcomed new commissioners. The City will provide free black and white business cards to commissioners upon request.

Mr. Baldini – Inquired about the status of automatic railroad crossing gates. ***Ms. Pfeil talked with the City Administrator, City Council President, and DelDOT about all City***

DelDOT projects. DelDOT has thresholds that dictate what justifies a gate. She is looking to having DelDOT in a future workshop to educate on thresholds for railroad gates, crossings and signals and pedestrian crossings.

Requests that the City update the website to reflect current commissioners.

Ms. Smith – Welcomed new commissioners.

Mr. Justice – He would like to get copies of the updated edition of the *Planning Commissioner's Handbook* for all commissioners. He asked for a resource identifying thresholds for when something is to be reviewed, that zoning is complied with and the like. ***Ms. Pfeil is already working on a flowchart outlining different processes.***

Ms. Moore – Status of liquor store proposed for Seventh Street. ***The Planning Commission has no jurisdiction in this matter.*** What plans are in place to repair potholes on Route 9? ***Council President Ratchford informed that repaving work would be done in the near future.*** Complimented Ms. Pfeil on the information/education she provides to commissioners.

Mr. Bird – Working with the City to learn status of membership with the American Planning Commission and ensure memberships are current.

The next meeting is 2/24/14. There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer